



Summary of 2005 AARP Driver Safety Program Graduate Study

**Data Collected by AARP
Report Prepared by Gail Kutner**

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AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice, and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. We produce *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, our bimonthly magazine in Spanish and English; *NRTA Live and Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our web site, www.aarp.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Acknowledgements

AARP collected and analyzed the data and wrote the report. S.A.I.D., Inc. tabulated the data. For additional information contact the author, Gail Kutner, at (202)-434-6325.



SUMMARY OF 2005 AARP DRIVER SAFETY PROGRAM GRADUATE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The AARP Driver Safety Program (DSP) is the nation's first and largest classroom refresher course for drivers age 50 and older that has helped millions of drivers remain safe on today's roads. The courses are taught by trained volunteer instructors.

The 2005 AARP DSP Graduate Study was conducted to evaluate the AARP DSP course in terms of:

- usefulness of the course
- concerns about driving situations
- changes graduates made as a result of course
- topics to include in future courses

METHODOLOGY

The 2005 AARP DSP Graduate Survey was mailed in May 2005 to a random sample of 10,000 people from the AARP Driver Safety Program database, who had taken and graduated from the AARP Driver Safety Program course between October 2004 and December 2004. A total of 3,512 usable questionnaires were received before the cutoff date, which resulted in a 35% response rate.

AARP mailed out and received the completed questionnaires and the data entry was done by S.A.I.D., Inc. Gail Kutner, AARP, Knowledge Management, analyzed the data and wrote the report.

The annotated questionnaire (questionnaire with the answers written in) can be found in the Appendix.

FINDINGS

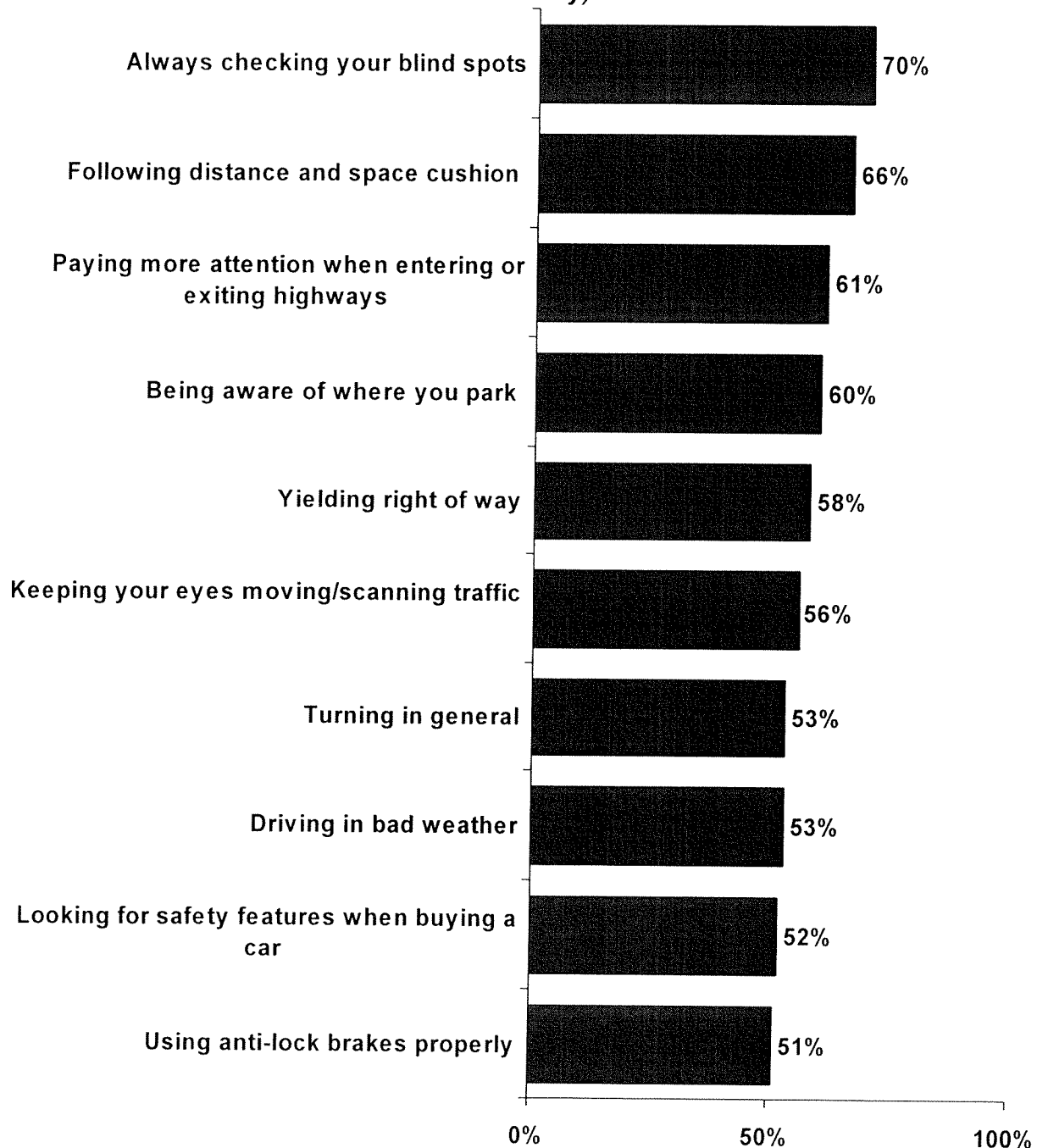
Impact of AARP DSP Course on DSP Graduates

Almost all of the 2005 AARP DSP graduates (91%) had said that they had changed at least one driving behavior as a result of taking the DSP course. The following list includes the top five behaviors that graduates report having changed as a result of DSP:

- always checking your blind spots
- following distance and space cushion
- paying more attention when entering or exiting highways
- being aware of where you park
- yielding right of way

(See Figure 1.)

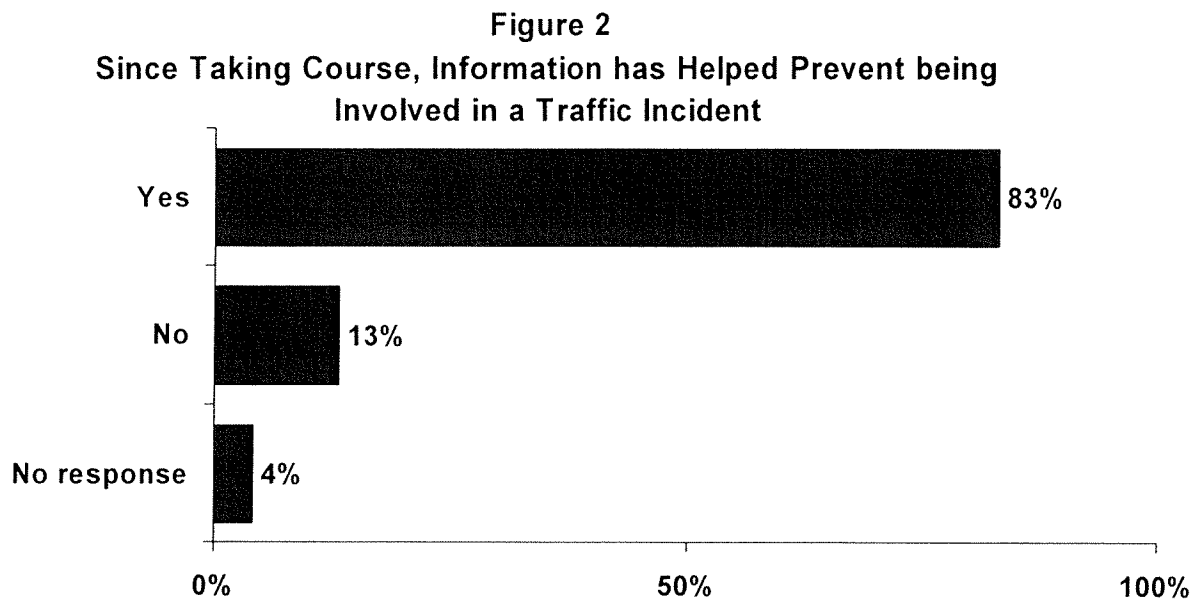
Figure 1
Graduates Behavior Changes as a Result of DSP Course
(Percent reporting most of the time, some of the time, and occasionally)



Source: 2005 AARP Driver Safety Program Graduate Study

Prevention of Traffic Incidents

In addition to behaviors that they believe were changed as a result of a DSP course, more than eight in ten of the 2005 AARP DSP graduates felt that information learned in the DSP has helped to prevent them from being involved in a traffic incident. (See Figure 2.)

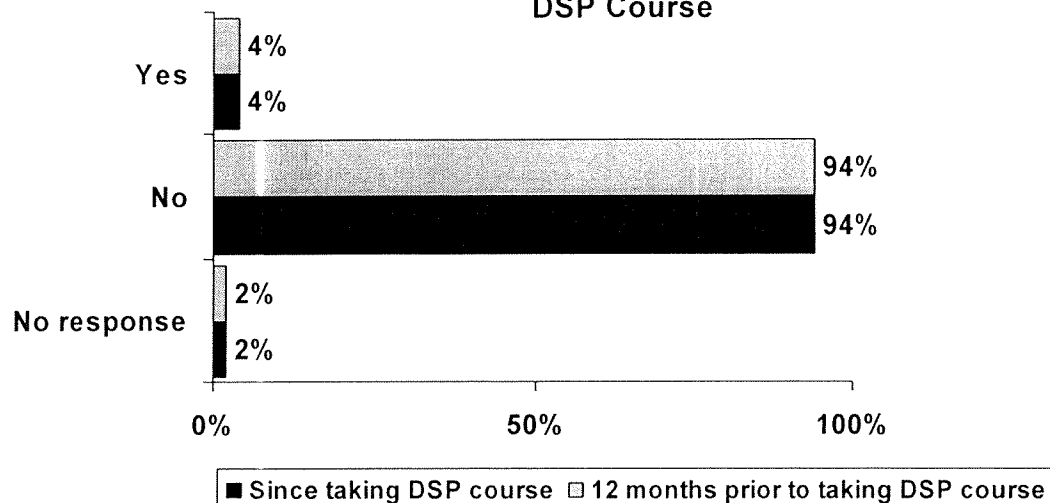


Source: 2005 AARP Driver Safety Program Graduate Study

Traffic Violations, Citations or Crashes

Only four percent of the graduates in 2005 said they had some traffic violations, citations, or crashes either for the 12 months before the DSP course or since taking the most recent DSP course. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3
2005 AARP DSP Graduates Who had any Violations, Citations, or Crashes 12 Months Prior to and Since Taking the Most Recent DSP Course



Source: 2005 AARP Driver Safety Program Graduate Study

IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the graduates from the 2005 AARP Driver Safety Program believe that the DSP course has positively affected their driving behaviors. The most frequently reported changes in driving behaviors correspond to the emphasis of the course material in the DSP course.

The graduates also said that information learned in the DSP courses has helped prevent them from being involved in traffic incidents.

As a result of the course, some graduates said they had considered limiting the times when they drove and limiting or stopping driving.



Older Drivers' Needs Addressed

Recognizing the need to help older drivers improve their skills and prevent traffic accidents, AARP offers the **AARP Driver Safety Program** to all motorists age 50 and older. The eight-hour classroom refresher was the first and is now the largest nationwide, comprehensive curriculum designed especially for the older motorist. The program is available to both Association members and nonmembers. The graduates to date exceed eight million.

AARP's involvement in driver improvement education for older Americans began in 1969. In that year the Association began teaching the National Safety Council's (NSC) Defensive Driving Course (DDC) to older Americans nationwide. The program grew dramatically, and by 1979, when the DDC was phased out, more than 400,000 older Americans had completed the course. In addition, the National Safety Council honored AARP as the number one civilian trainer of drivers every year between 1969 and 1979. The ten consecutive awards cite outstanding contributions to adult driver education.

One reason for the program's extraordinary growth was the enthusiastic response from Association members who volunteered to become instructors. More than 4,500 instructors age 50 and older were trained by AARP during the involvement with DDC.

Beneficial as this training effort was, the DDC program had some limitations for older motorists. The DDC was not geared to compensate for the age-related physical changes of older persons because it was designed for all drivers age 16 and older. It was felt that another program was needed, one that would include a specific classroom refresher curriculum for older motorists on age-

related physical changes, declining perceptual skills, rules of the road, local driving problems, and license renewal.

An additional change deemed necessary was in the manner of program presentation. Older adults learn best and have the greatest retention rate when the opportunity to participate in the learning process is maximized.

Creation of the AARP Driver Safety Program

Convinced that older drivers should have a training program of their own, AARP decided to create one. AARP curriculum developers collected data from all the nation's state departments of motor vehicles, state agencies on aging, state offices of highway safety, and state departments of transportation. They also reviewed materials and contribu-

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tions from safety councils, associations, universities, and various agencies of the federal government. They held discussions with many of the nation's distinguished traffic safety educators to obtain their views regarding the needs of older drivers.

During this process they uncovered a total of 12 older driver courses that had been developed since 1961. Most had been short lived, but they were examined for their successes and failures.

The result was the first comprehensive driver education program fashioned specifically to meet the needs of older motorists: **The AARP Driver Safety Program.**

The Program concentrates on those driver education concerns important to older Americans. In the United States, there are approximately 57 million registered drivers age 50 and older. This constitutes 30% of all drivers on the nation's roadways. According to U.S. government figures this percentage is expected to increase significantly in the years ahead.

The Accident Record of the Older Driver

Drivers over age 50 are a unique population and have specific physiological considerations and driving problems. How do these individuals compare with other age brackets in safe driving practice and incidence of accidents? In order to obtain an accurate picture it is not enough to consider only age and numbers of accidents; it is also necessary to factor in the annual number of miles driven per year. Research shows that the number of annual miles driven by motor vehicle operators begins to decline significantly after age 55. Therefore, the criteria used to determine accident involvement statistics are important to consider with regard to the safe driving practices and abilities of older persons. The record of the older driver is good when calculated on the basis of accidents per driver. When the same figures are examined on the basis of miles driven annually a different picture emerges. This more significant and meaningful statistic highlights the urgent need for corrective measures to re-educate older drivers.

Since older persons drive fewer miles, corrections must be made for driving exposure. When this factor is included in accident involvement rates, and the involvement per exposure is determined, a U-shaped curve of accidents versus age results. Violations and accident rates per mile are higher for the youngest and oldest

drivers and lower for those in the middle ranges. Although one can quibble over the exact placement of the curve, a general "U" configuration has emerged in every major study undertaken during the past 30 years.

The National Safety Council reports that when the number of miles driven is taken into account, drivers age 55 and older have a poorer accident record than drivers in their middle years.

The U.S. Department of Transportation identifies the older driver as being age 60 and older and in a group that requires special consideration in the development of driver improvement training procedures. The National Highway Safety Forecast points out that the older driver is adjudged at fault more frequently than middle-aged drivers. Because of the population age shift currently underway in America, the potential for hazard created by older drivers is one of the fastest growing highway safety problem areas.

The Differences of Older Drivers

Older drivers do not commit traffic violations such as speeding, drunk driving, or reckless driving to any significant degree.

Older drivers do have problems when involved in driving situations requiring quick response, full vision, and interaction with other drivers. Typical violations include failure to yield right-of-way, improper turning, and incorrect lane changing, passing, and entering and leaving expressways.

The older driver learned to drive during the first 40 years of this century, well before the advent of formal driver education programs in the public school systems. The older driver who has completed a formal driver training course is the exception rather than the rule.

These individuals may experience physical changes that affect driving ability and attitudes. People age at different rates, so age alone is not a fair criterion for determining driving competence, and there is no question that driving ability can be affected by the aging process. The gradual failure of sensory acuity associated with aging reduces the quantity and accuracy of information capable of being processed. This reduces the ability of the individual to respond or react to his environment with the speed and judgment current traffic often requires.

Eighty-five to 90 percent of all sensory input needed to drive comes via the eye. Unfortunately, as one ages, the need for illumination increases, glare sensitivity rises, dark adaption lessens, and peripheral vision narrows. Hearing loss also presents problems for older drivers. It is also broadly accepted that as one ages, muscles tend to weaken or atrophy.

Research shows that normal age-related physical changes begin to accelerate at age 55. Accidents per mile driven begin to increase at this same age. We accept all motor vehicle drivers age 50 and older because this allows the 50-54 year old age group to prepare for the normal age-related physical changes and anticipate accident behavior. It gives them a head start.

Curriculum: Edition 5

The curriculum consists of eleven chapters. The course is typically given over a two-day period. Each session lasts four hours.

- Chapter One:** Getting Started
- Chapter Two:** Judging Yourself
- Chapter Three:** Physical Changes
- Chapter Four:** Potential Trouble Spots
- Chapter Five:** Aggressive Driving/
Road Rage
- Chapter Six:** Safety Considerations
- Chapter Seven:** Driver Guidance
- Chapter Eight:** Your Vehicle
- Chapter Nine:** Intersections
- Chapter Ten:** The Freeway
- Chapter Eleven:** Driving Retirement

Conduct of Courses

Courses are conducted by qualified volunteers. These volunteers are recruited and trained by AARP in a three-phase process. An Instructor training session provides the overall training to conduct educational discussion groups and review educational learning skills. In the second phase the Instructor's first course is conducted as a practice teaching session monitored by a volunteer supervisor. The last phase is an ongoing supervision process supplemented by regular in-service training workshops.

Each participant is charged a minimal fee to help offset overall program costs that include Instructor recruitment and training, Instructor

out-of-pocket expenses, ongoing supervisory training nationwide, and program materials and their distribution. AARP subsidizes the remaining expenses. Each Instructor volunteers his/her time.

National Sponsors

The cosponsorship of the program by national organizations grows each year. Current cosponsors include the following: American Bankers Association, American Hospital Association, American Legion, American Optometric Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police, American Academy of Ophthalmology, National Sheriffs Association, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. Cosponsors provide such assistance as facilities for holding the course, slide projectors or VCRs used in presentations, publicity, etc.

Independent Evaluations

Numerous evaluations have been conducted on the program. The results demonstrate effectiveness. A major insurance company reports that one hundred thousand graduates tracked over many years demonstrate a 10% accident claim reduction (1990, 1992, and 1994). Evaluations involving tens of thousands of graduates by the California Department of Motor Vehicles (1989), the New York Department of Motor Vehicles (1988), and the New York Department of Insurance (1987) demonstrate reductions in traffic violations and in accidents that otherwise result in injuries and fatalities.

The U.S. Department of Transportation evaluated the program in the early 1980s. Project researchers found a large and statistically significant increase in knowledge in the treatment group that was retained during the entire evaluation period. Drivers taking the course showed a trend in violation reduction; however, although several thousand people participated, the numbers of evaluation participants were not large enough to demonstrate statistical significance regarding accidents.

Insurance Premium Discounts to Graduates of State-Approved Courses

State	Discount	Age	Effective Date	State	Discount	Age	Effective Date
AK	Appropriate	55+	1988	NJ	Appropriate (Minimum 5%)	All licensed drivers	1996
AL	Appropriate	55+	2000				
AR	Appropriate	55+	1981	NM	Appropriate	55+	1987
CA	Appropriate	55+	1987	NV	Appropriate	55+	1989
CO	Appropriate	55+	1991	NY	10% on liability, personal injury pro- tection and collision	All licensed drivers	1981
CT	Appropriate (Minimum 5%)	62+	1983	OK	Appropriate	All licensed drivers	1986
DE	10% on liability and personal injury protection	All licensed drivers	1982				
DC	Appropriate	55+	1985	OR	Appropriate	55+	1990
FL	Appropriate	55+	1986	PA	Appropriate (Minimum 5%)	55+	1990
GA	Appropriate (Minimum 10%)	All licensed drivers	1989	RI	Appropriate	55+	1984
				SC	Appropriate	55+	1994
KS	Appropriate	All licensed drivers	1993	SD	Appropriate	55+	1988
				TN	Appropriate	55+	1984
KY	Appropriate	55+	1984	TX	10% of premium	All licensed drivers	1974
ID	Appropriate	65+	1989				
IL	Appropriate	55+	1982	UT	Appropriate	55+	1988
LA	Appropriate	55+	1984	VA	Appropriate	55+	1985
ME	Appropriate	55+	2001	WA	Appropriate	55+	1986
MN	Appropriate (Minimum 10%)	55+	1985	WV	Appropriate	55+	1986
MS	Appropriate	55+	1988	WY	Appropriate	55+	1983
MT	Appropriate	55+	1987				
ND	Appropriate	All licensed drivers	1983				

Insurance Reduction

Currently, several automobile insurance companies in selected states voluntarily provide premium reductions to graduates. In addition, legislation has been enacted in 36 states and the District of Columbia requiring all automobile insurance companies conducting business in those states to provide a premium discount to graduates of state-approved improvement courses. The program is approved in every state.

Many other states are currently considering this legislation.

For further information, write:

AARP Driver Safety Program
P.O. Box 93114
Long Beach, CA 90809-3114

Or, call toll free:

1-888-227-7669 (1-888-AARP-NOW)
www.aarp.org/drive

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people 50 and over. We provide information and resources; advocate on legislative, consumer, and legal issues; assist members to serve their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These benefits include AARP Webplace at www.aarp.org, *AARP Modern Maturity*, and *My Generation* magazines, the monthly *AARP Bulletin*, and a Spanish-language newspaper, *Segunda Juventud*. Active in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP celebrates the attitude that age is just a number and life is what you make it.

AARP Driver Safety Program

2005 Graduates and Courses by States

State	YTD Graduates	YTD Courses	Graduates by month>>>>																									
			Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec														
Alabama	2,912	185	157	343	409	232	293	221	99	275	299	247	226	111														
Alaska	1,823	112	110	124	195	123	267	111	128	153	186	232	125	69														
Arizona	14,210	746	1692	1675	1949	1295	1251	898	800	664	797	1060	1186	943														
Arkansas	13,098	638	837	1055	1703	966	1113	994	644	1394	1376	1047	1157	812														
California	55,355	2,956	4275	4681	6534	5070	5411	4443	4181	4338	4566	4586	4628	2642														
Colorado	14,948	877	1136	1084	1416	1458	1423	1328	1024	1437	1047	1589	1224	782														
Connecticut	14,513	743	481	908	1277	1945	1666	1352	868	999	1105	1742	1543	627														
Delaware	5,074	265	293	440	527	458	520	337	308	329	486	565	400	411														
Florida	70,814	3,437	6423	9186	10627	7056	5943	3962	3231	3354	5137	5051	6286	4558														
Georgia	17,948	923	1090	1959	2311	1704	1905	1240	1156	1377	1224	1815	1421	746														
Guam	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0														
Hawaii	1,698	120	129	145	171	196	156	171	141	90	150	121	132	96														
Idaho	2,536	181	118	205	263	260	257	222	218	147	241	341	180	84														
Illinois	16,517	945	556	812	1684	1699	2085	1523	1258	1580	1432	1479	1742	667														
Indiana	1,640	125	11	65	35	368	238	138	187	93	94	196	167	48														
Iowa	658	62	0	22	62	57	137	64	47	29	88	60	92	0														
Kansas	4,536	303	199	330	619	550	536	383	308	296	340	476	326	173														
Kentucky	4,471	232	205	190	580	392	588	477	303	343	308	496	470	119														
Louisiana	8,752	429	752	919	1055	1139	1019	718	547	890	496	445	489	283														
Maine	1,380	87	0	61	8	169	324	119	75	27	102	265	192	38														
Maryland	5,896	358	231	531	672	852	456	616	366	220	412	713	448	379														
Massachusetts	833	60	33	0	41	106	113	67	96	40	58	227	52	0														
Michigan	2,798	236	34	28	206	282	481	381	119	37	266	421	403	140														
Minnesota	52,872	2,384	2729	3999	4937	5703	6784	4058	3024	3101	4220	7043	4421	2853														
Mississippi	3,375	209	208	361	428	379	463	176	340	378	174	251	182	35														
Missouri	3,553	263	116	197	387	596	451	227	217	375	239	249	356	143														
Montana	4,008	217	229	327	540	476	365	316	214	303	287	476	394	81														
Nebraska	619	59	16	59	44	63	100	75	51	57	48	40	60	6														
Nevada	7,312	392	566	485	856	642	754	670	453	552	565	604	663	502														
New Hampshire	1,598	115	32	77	177	230	202	203	23	163	126	167	155	43														
New Jersey	10,881	618	384	700	1157	1230	1298	983	821	995	801	921	1319	272														
New Mexico	7,785	324	632	712	966	659	645	668	533	705	479	729	577	480														
New York	114,692	4,426	5017	6985	10769	11980	14297	10799	7888	7219	9659	12556	11260	6263														
North Carolina	2,345	217	84	144	244	237	344	175	214	201	167	226	262	47														
North Dakota	1,208	80	111	59	96	134	133	87	48	45	104	146	216	29														
Ohio	3,565	283	41	85	410	347	464	393	199	186	333	530	352	225														
Oklahoma	8,458	421	405	601	1252	702	971	581	530	687	759	766	830	374														

AARP Driver Safety Program

2005 Graduates and Courses by States

State	Graduates by month>>>>>>													
	YTD Graduates	YTD Courses	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Oregon	15,362	899	868	1422	1643	1639	1305	1493	1031	1109	1144	1362	1517	829
Pennsylvania	36,657	1,819	894	1973	3707	5030	4831	2711	2155	2563	2955	4690	3952	1196
Puerto Rico	28	2	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	4	0
Rhode Island	1,016	57	5	48	43	97	130	117	79	71	73	153	139	61
South Carolina	3,972	233	211	586	524	470	349	312	219	257	341	305	265	133
South Dakota	978	62	24	98	76	89	94	111	88	27	78	186	78	29
Tennessee	7,425	394	397	635	829	1188	774	629	334	634	372	666	660	307
Texas	33,035	1,891	2438	4053	4091	2764	3075	1935	2254	2831	2631	2865	2901	1197
Utah	2,914	202	87	255	340	256	266	356	267	239	250	185	351	62
Vermont	1,066	67	0	6	41	178	167	140	70	86	87	113	178	0
Virgin Islands	40	7	0	10	5	0	5	0	17	0	0	3	0	0
Virginia	11,437	605	481	821	1347	1265	1528	940	642	746	870	1285	1116	396
Washington	20,504	1,282	1355	1836	2443	2148	1773	1962	1295	1349	1526	2097	1801	919
Washington DC	973	64	34	102	111	98	152	36	53	55	89	140	76	27
West Virginia	3,567	232	49	215	370	602	629	304	143	293	291	367	237	67
Wisconsin	3,753	264	96	127	236	389	605	432	229	206	334	555	419	125
Wyoming	2,620	145	61	284	252	267	232	187	184	160	273	358	290	72
Totals	630,028	32,253	36,332	52,025	70,676	66,235	69,368	50,841	39,719	43,718	49,485	63,208	57,920	30,501



Gene L. Wriggelsworth
Sheriff
1998-1999 President
Michigan Sheriff's Association

Matthew J. Myers, Ph. D.
Undersheriff

INGHAM COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

630 N. CEDAR STREET • MASON, MICHIGAN 48854-1098
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E-MAIL wriggelsworth@ingham.org

April 24, 2006

Mr. LeRoy A. Fladseth
Michigan State Coordinator
AARP Driver Safety Program
3524 Aragon Drive
Lansing, MI 48906

Dear Mr. Fladseth,

Please be advised that I strongly support the purposed legislation that would allow seniors citizen to receive a discount from auto insurance companies upon completion of a driver improvement program.

With inflation we need to devise ways to ensure that our seniors can have affordable insurance and also provide them with a way to improve their driving skills.

I thank you and the AARP for the leadership you have provided in this area, as well as wishing you success in this commendable project.

Sincerely,


Gene L. Wriggelsworth
Sheriff

GLW/kc

